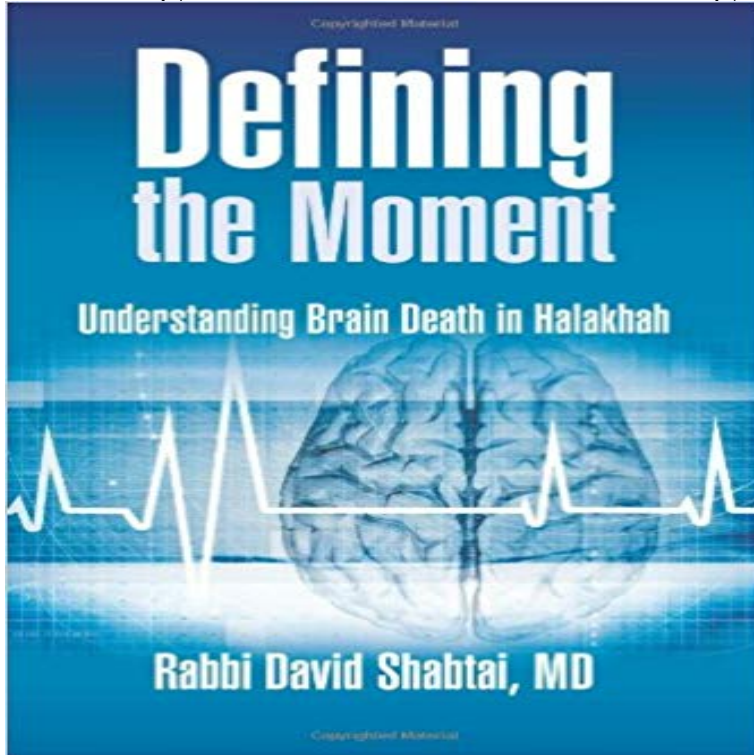


Defining the Moment: Understanding Brain Death in Halakhah



Defining the Moment: Understanding Brain Death in Halakhah presents the halakhic approaches to understanding brain death. Modern halakhists are indeed split on whether brain death qualifies as death, with many rejecting the notion and others embracing it as meaningful. Answering this question is of life and death importance, since organs can only be transplanted from dead donors. Brain death is accepted as death in most legal systems. Ever since the concept of brain death was introduced in the 1960s, philosophers, ethicists, and religious leaders alike have argued its meaning. All modern halakhists rely on the same medical facts and their conclusions stem from the same rich halakhic corpus, yet lead to diametrically opposed conclusions. Defining the Moment first presents the science and cutting edge medicine behind the diagnosis and physiology of brain death, providing the context for evaluating and analyzing the halakhic positions. The book then provides perspective by examining the assumptions and questioning the premises of the different halakhic approaches. In comparing and contrasting the various opinions, Defining the Moment creates a conversation between them, analyzing each approach in light of the sources and in response to each other. Balancing saving the recipients life against the sanctity of the life of the potential donor, even if short-lived, is monumental and terrifying. This complexly choreographed dance puts the sanctity of both the donor and recipients lives at its center and champions it as a halakhic ideal, advocating maximizing life whenever possible. This halakhic exploration of the issue provides a wonderful example of how the timeless Halakhah relates to our modern, highly technological, and scientific lives. Defining the Moment offers a window into this exciting and challenging chapter in the living halakhic process.

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